



THE

KNIGHT



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HERALDRY OF KING VYTAUTAS THE GREAT

The silver commemorative to be issued in the second quarter of 2010 in celebration of the 600 year anniversary of the July 15, 1410 Battle of Žalgiris (Gruenwald/Tannenberg) will display on the obverse the matrix of the armorial Great Seal of King Vytautas the Great. A matrix is the engraved metal die which, when pressed into warm wax, produces a seal. Thus, when you get one of these coins and look at the obverse, you will be looking at the mirror image of King Vytautas the Great's armorial Great Seal. For comparison, the enlarged image of the coin and the seal are presented. Clearly, the coin displays a very accurate replica of the seal's matrix. Actually, the only difference between the coin and the seal's matrix, besides size, is the legend. The legend on the coin is clear enough. The Latin legend of the seal reads: **s.alexandri.alias.wytoldi.digra.ducis.lyth wanie.herdis.trocens.dniq.rvces**. With the abbreviations expanded, the legend translates: **Seal of Alexander, also known as Vytautas, by the grace of God, Lord of Lithuania, inheritor of Trakai and Lord of Ruthenia.**



the grace of God, Lord of Lithuania, Inheritor of Trakai and Lord of Ruthenia. The seal is about 2 1/2 inches (about 62 mm) in diameter and was attached to documents dated 1401, 1404, and 1410 which were known to have been housed at the Czartoryski Archive and Cracow City Archive in Cracow Poland, and in the Secret Archive of the Teutonic Order, formerly in Koenigsberg, Prussia but now in Berlin.

This seal is the first display of heraldry claimed by Vytautas as his own. His earlier seals were a pedestrian and an equestrian figure non-armorial seals without any heraldry displayed.

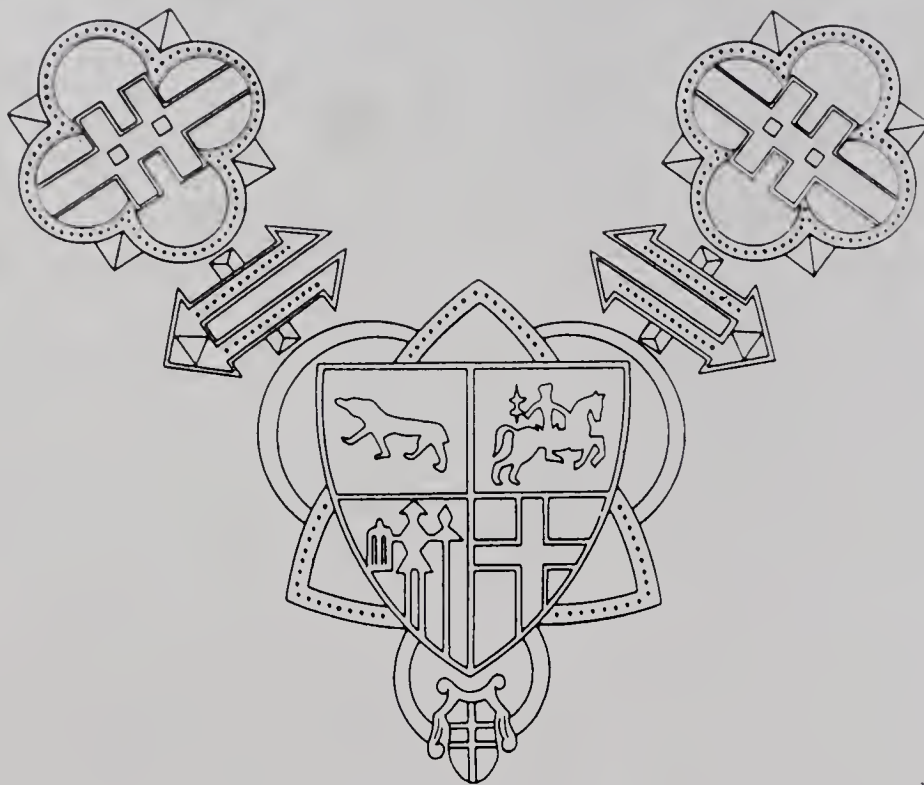
In the first position of this armorial seal is the Cross of Volynia, modeled after the cross of the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order. It would be interesting

to determine when the cross was adopted as the arms of Volynia: Most probably it was Vytautas who adopted it and most likely after his defeat by the Tatars in 1399, but before 1401, thus, about 1400. His cousin King Jogalia had adopted the Apostolis Cross as his personal arms in the early 1380's, and, considering the threat posed by the Teutonic Order, the political value of an arms familiar to the Teutonic Order for a domain ruled by Vytautas is self evident, though placing it in the first position is curious. Vytautas ruled Volynia from 1385 to 1390 as a vassal of King Jogalia and again from 1392 to his death in 1430 as a sovereign and *de facto* King of Lithuania.

We do not know what colors were adopted for the Volynian Cross, but on the Order of Vytautas the Great, instituted by the Republic of Lithuania in 1930, the colors are a white cross in a black field. The czarist Russian army had a Volynian Regiment displaying a white cross in a red field.

In the second position of the quartered arms is the Vytis of the Lithuanian Empire, only the rider does not display a shield and wields a lance, not a sword. The Vytis was adopted as the arms of Lithuanian Empire by King Jogalia, probably around 1382, though when used by Jogalia, the knight carries a shield charged with the personal arms of Jogalia - the Apostolic Cross.

In the third position is the arms of Trakai, a pedestrian warrior. This arms was based on the pedestrian seals of Lords Kęstutis and Vytautas and I believe it was adopted as the arms of Trakai by Vytautas, probably in 1400. The armorial rolls compiled as a consequence of the Council of Constance (1414-1418) record the personal flag of King Vytautas, quartered arms of Lithuania (1st and 4th position) and Trakai (2nd and 3rd position). The rolls show the arms of Trakai to be: in a yellow field, a black pedestrian warrior - the same colors as those of the arms of the "Holy Roman Emperor" - in a yellow field, a black eagle. Although the early rolls are consistent in the colors, the depiction and postures of the riders and the pedestrian warriors vary considerably, suggesting that the artists drew the arms independently, that they drew the arms from verbal



Order of Vytautas the Great and its chain, instituted in 1930. Besides President Antanas Smetona, about four other individuals were recipients of this order.



Depictions of King Vytautas's personal arms in early armorial rolls. Where the roll depicted supporters, they were removed. Supporters are crowns, crested helms with feathery streamer flowing from the sides or top of the helm and/or figures on the sides of the arms holding the shield. Supporters are sometimes added as decorations to arms, but are not an integral part of the arms. Further, for illustrative purposes, the width of the arms was made to be about the same. The first from the left is from 'Das Wappenbuch Conrad von Grunenberg, Ritters und Burges zu Constanze' published in 1480. The Council of Constance in Switzerland was from 1414 to 1418. The second and the third are from Ulrich Richental's armorial roll of participants at the Council of Constance and was published in 1483 in Autsbürg. A copy is currently housed in the Rosenwald Collection and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress. The fourth is from 'Wappenbuch, Suddeutschland', published in the early 1500's.

descriptions and that they had not seen the the arms personally or in earlier armorial rolls. But more importantly, this variation in the depiction of the arms demonstrates a basic point about medieval heraldry completely missed by Lithuanian researchers, but one that can be quickly grasped if one were to look at any foreign roll, be it English, French, Belgian, Scottish, etc. Namely, that all verbal descriptions of arms give only the most basic information, and that they follow the same formate - the color of the field is given first, then the color of the device and then a concise description of the device. And when the arms are drawn, all is left to artistic license. For example, the verbal description of the Lithuanian Vytis in an armorial roll would be: in a red field, a white knight charging and wielding a sword and with a blue shield charged with a yellow Apostolic Cross. Thus, the statement sometimes made by Lithuanians to the effect that "change one line on a coat-of-arms and the whole meaning of the arms is changed" can not be supported in view of armorial rolls, be they verbal rolls or pictorial rolls.

Later, after King Vytautas's death in 1430, and during the Lithuanian war of succession between Lord Švitrigalia, brother of King Jogalia and Lord Žygimantas Kęstutaitis, brother of King Vytautas, the colors of Trakai were changed to war colors¹ - in a red field, a white pedestrian warrior. It is the war colors of The Trakai arms that were used on the Order of Vytautas the Great decoration in 1930.



Modern replica of the personal banner of King Vytautas the Great. Reconstructing the Lithuanian banners of the Battle of Žalgiris was a project conceived by Rev. Antanas Saulaitis, S.J. in the 1980's. Rev. Saulaitis and Aleksandras Radžius did the historical research, Aleksandras Radžius did the artwork as well as the full size drawings for each flag and Ramunė Petrulienė was the seamstress. All three were Lithuanian scout leaders at the time. Mrs. Petrulienė has since died. This flag, as well as all other reconstructed Lithuanian flags from the Battle of Žalgiris, the research material as well as the drawing have been donated by Rev. Saulaitis to the Lithuanian War Museum.

In the fourth position on the seal is a walking bear. One source says that it's the bear of Smolensk, another - the bear of Kiev. On the 1930 Order of Vytautas the Great, the colors were: in a yellow field, a walking black bear.

This armorial seal of King Vytautas was inspired by the armorial seal of his cousin King Jogalia. Below is a side-by-side comparison of the two seals displayed full size. On Jogalia's seal, the arms of Polonia, now called Greater Poland, (in a red and white checkered field, a black bull's head with a yellow crown and a yellow ring through its nose) is in the third position and the arms of Lechia, now called Little Poland, are in the fourth position (in a yellow field a black imperial eagle impaling the Lion of Bohemia - in a red field a white lion rampant)². The Imperial Eagle in the 1st position is discussed below. Note that the style of the Lithuanian Vytis, in the second position, is very similar to that of the non-armorial equestrian seal of the Marshal of the Livonian Order. The Volynian Cross on Vytautas's seal being very similar to the cross used by the Teutonic Knights and the Imperial Eagle, used by the "Holy Roman Emperor", would be very familiar to the leadership of the Teutonic Order. Thus, their placement in the 1st position on both seals has the effect of positively predisposing German viewers of the seals. No doubt, this same political consideration motivated many other medieval European rulers, Polish Piasts included, to display an Imperial Eagle on their coins and seals.

The reverses of all three coins commemorating the Battle of Žalgiris, to be



issued shortly, will have on their reverses battles scenes with banners and shields, a rich opportunity for the display of heraldry. Background information about Lithuanian heraldry will not only help to better appreciate what does appear on these commemorative coins, but will also help in appreciating what fails to appear.

Seal of the Marshal of the Livonian Order attached to a document dated October 8, 1348. The legend reads: S MARSCALCIDE LIVONIA

Notes

1. In medieval Eastern Europe, the colors of an arms were changed to convey very specific messages. An arms in its normal colors or one with a blue field meant 'peacetime'. To indicate that a state of war exists and that a call to arms has been issued, a flag with a red field replaced the peacetime flag. And it was with a flag in war colors that an army went onto to the battlefield. The commander had the option of exchanging the war flag with one where the color of field remained red, but the device was now in a black. Such a flag signaled to all, friend and foe, that "the battle is to the death, no prisoners taken". Jan Dlugosz records that many Lithuanian units went into battle against the Germans at Žalgiris displaying a red flag with a black Vytis. And indeed, after the battle and well into the night, the Germans were pursued and finished off, only those who would be valuable for the ransom they might fetch were spared. Further, the Germans report that after the battle, only one in ten mercenaries presented himself at Marianberg to collect his pay. A casualty rate of 90% is total defeat, indeed.

This method of communication by the changing of the colors of the flag/arms was not as widely used in medieval western European as in eastern Europe, especially changing the 'war colors' to the 'to the death colors'.

Of interest is that at times, a glimpse of this 'blue field-peace/red field-war' message presents itself when on rare occasion an arms of England are encountered with the three yellow lions rampant are displayed in a blue field, rather than a red field. In view of the almost constant warfare between medieval England and France, it is not surprising that the red field would be considered by an overwhelming majority of Englishmen as their normal arms.

This language of changing colors of the arms might be the basis of the white eagle in a red field eventually becoming the Polish arms.

2. An impaled arms is one where two arms are split down the middle, and the left half of one is joined to the right half of the other. The arms of Lechia (Little Poland, with its capital in Cracow) are a consequence of the Bohemia occupation of Lechia and Polonia (1279 - 1306). Examples of the Lechia arms, with half of the Imperial Eagle in the first position and the Bohemian lion half in the second position are encountered just as often vice versa. Thus, one can not say which is the "correct" arrangement of the two half-arms. The impaled arms of Lechia (*Polish: Lech, Lithuanian: Lenkija, Hungarian: Lengyel, Russian: Lex*) suggests that before the Bohemian occupation, the arms adopted by Lachia Piasts for the whole domain were the same as the arms of the Holy Roman Emperor, since many of the Lachia Piast noble received the designation 'Prince of the Holy Roman Empire'. We know that among the German forces was a Polish Piast Lord from Silesia with his troops, who displayed as his banner the arms of the Roman Emperor, indicating that he had been designated 'Prince of the Holy Roman Empire'. It would be good to know which Piasts of Lechia, which of Polonia and which from Silesia had been designated 'Prince of the Holy Roman Empire'. A couple hundred years later, a Lithuanian noble, Radvila, was designated 'Prince of the Holy Roman Empire'. To this day, the Radvila family uses the Imperial Eagle as part of their arms.

SEALS OF KING JOGALIA

(continued from the last issue)

This non-armorial equestrian seal of King Jogalia is about 1 1/2 inches (about 40 mm) in diameter and had been attached to documents dated 1379, 1380, 1382, 1383, 1385 and 1386 which were known to have been housed in the Crown Archive and the Czartoryski Archive in Cracow and in the Secret Archive of the Teutonic Order in Berlin. Below is a photograph followed by three independent renderings of this seal, note how closely the details agree.



Comparing the hind legs, neck and tail of the steed on this seal with those on the seal discussed in the last issue (illustration repeated at right), shows that this seal is indeed a different seal and that the previous seal was not a worn specimen of the seal under discussion.

The legend 'iagal dey gracia rex m lettow' is noteworthy not only because the title 'rex' is used, but also because it is followed by 'm', an abbreviation for 'magnus'.



The expanded legend reads: 'iagal dey gracia rex magnus lettow'. The inclusion of 'magnus' after 'rex' suggests that the title REX was understood in this case in the same way as the slavic title KNIAZ, as in VELIKII KNIAZ. It would seem that on this seal, REX is used as a non-specific title. Such a usage is not unlike the use of HIGH KING by the Irish or MAHA RAJAH by the Asiatic Indians, PADI SHAH by the Persians, Turks and Iranians, and so on, where RAJAH and SHAH, when used singly, are translated as KING. However, the caveat can not be excluded that inclusion of M(AGNUS) might have been self-grandeurization by Jogalia, since this seal was made very soon after the death of King Algirdas and it was a long time before King Jogalia fully established his dominance over all challengers to his authority.

We Lithuanians have an obligation to realise that in the west, two systems of royalty/nobility titling were used - specific/ranking and non-specific/non-ranking and, whereas, in the east, only the non-specific/non-ranking system was used. The specific/ranking titles in English are: KING, DUKE, MARQUIS, EARL/COUNT, VISCOUNT, BARON, KNIGHT. The non-specific/non-ranking titles are: English LORD, Lithuanian VIEŠPATS, German HERR, Latin DOMINUS, Greek KYRIE, Hungarian UR, Slavic languages KNIAZ/KSIAZE, Mongolian KHAN, etc. These non-specific titles can be used in addressing everyone from God all the way down to a landlord.

Further, for the eastern mindset, modifying the title with 'Great' did not modify the non-specificity of the title. For example, Jogalia's brother Lengvenis used the title 'Velikii Kniaz' though he never pretended to either the thrones of Lithuania, Lechia or Polonia and was a faithful vassal of both Vytautas and Jogalia. Another example is the funeral dirge for Ghengis Khan wherein he is referred to interchangeably as KHAN and as GREAT KHAN. The sober reality was, is and will always be that a sovereign is the sovereign because of his abilities, not because of the title he uses; what crown, or by whom, it was put on his head; whether his sovereignty was or was not ratified by a foreign entity; or because of some weapon he pulled out of, or from under, a stone; or as a result of some other hocus-pocus.

Clearly, one can render a specific title into a non-specific title and be linguistically, historically, politically and logically correct, but the reverse is never true! All renderings of a non-specific title into a specific are wrong regardless if it is done within a culture/language or between cultures/languages! For a concrete example, please study of the parallel usage by the English of the non-specific title LORD and their usage of specific titles and their strictly one-way interchangeability. In the Lithuanian culture, the earliest surviving example of the error in translating a non-specific title (Kniaz) into a specific title (Dux) is on a seal of Lord Kęstutis. This error was then expounded by his son, Lord Vytautas.

By knowing of these two system of titling, we can intelligently evaluate the titles used by our sovereigns on our early coins and seals, we can better evaluate and correct the translational errors which had been made and are still being made.

It should be noted that, beginning with this seal and on all his subsequent seals, King Jogalia titles himself as REX of Lithuania.

Note also that this non-armorial seal depicts a frontal portrait of King Jogalia. His likeness is again depicted on his subsequent seals as well as on his sarcophagus. Thus we have not only the possibility of reconstructing his likeness, but to follow it as he ages and thereby seeing the face of an outstanding Lithuanian King, one who we should be calling 'Jogalia the Clever'.

(to be continued in the next issue)

NUMISMATIC TRACKS OF ORTHODOXY

Aleksandras Radžius

Now, Lithuania is considered the frontier between east and west, between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Now, Europe is overwhelmingly a Catholic/Protestant and a non-Orthodox continent. But this was not the case a thousand years ago, when Bruno was one of the western missionaries to travel to the east. Then, Orthodoxy was a cultural force not only in eastern Europe but also in western Europe. Numismatic tracks of this influence exist.

Denmark's King Harthacnut (1035-1042) and King Estridsen (1047-1074) minted Byzantine style coins similar to the coins of Eastern Roman Emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII (joint reign 975-1025), Emperor Romanus III Argyrus (1028-1034), and others. One of the Byzantine coins copied had on the obverse an enthroned image of Christ holding a gospel book and on the reverse two figures, one representing the king and the other an angel handing the king's banner, or placing his hand on the king's head in blessing.

Further to the west, the English King, Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), though using the title REX on his coins, used the Greek title BASILEI on his Great Seal. Edward's successor, William the Conqueror (1066-1087), though using the title REX on his coins and on his Great Seal, titled himself BASILEI in some of his documents.

The Orthodox influence in the west began to be eradicated after the Schism of 1054, but in the east, Orthodoxy remained influential as ever. Just as Orthodoxy had to be considered a necessary caveat in evaluating our Millennium last year, so also, Orthodoxy has to be considered one of the political forces which contributed to the Battle of Žalgiris.



Byzantine coins on top and their Danish copies below from about the time of Bruno of Querfurt.



Obverse and reverse of Edward the Confessor's two-sided seal. The legend SIGILLVM EADVARDI ANGLORVM BASILEI is identical on both sides except that on the obverse, the 'm' of 'Anglorum' is missing.

Ironically, in spite of all the efforts King Jogalia placed in aligning the Catholic Church to his policies, and in spite of all the efforts King Vytautas placed in aligning the Teutonic Order and the "Holy Roman Emperor" to his policies, each has his favorat retreat decorated in an Orthodox style. For King Jogalia, it was his chapel in Lublin. For King Vytautas, it was his birthplace - the Island Castle of Trakai.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The Battle of Žalgiris was commemorated by a Polish entity one hundred years ago with a brass medal 21 mm in diameter, 1 mm thick at the edge, 2 mm thick in the center and with loop at the top for a ribbon. In the center of the obverse are 3/4 frontal portraits of King Jogalia and King Vytautas. At the 10 o'clock position of the obverse field is an Imperial Eagle in a shield - later to become the arms of the Polish state, and at about the 4 o'clock position is the Lithuanian Vytis. From the 10 to the 12 o'clock position, the legend reads KROL JAGIELA and from the 1 to the 3 o'clock position, W.K. WITOLD. From about the 7 to the 6 o'clock positions are the dates 1410-1910. The reverse depicts King Jogalia holding a banner emblazoned with the Imperial Eagle standing next to King Vytautas who rests his left hand on a shield emblazoned with the Lithuanian Vytis. At their feet are broken lances. From about the 7 to the 4 o'clock clockwise, the legend reads: W 500 ROCZNICE POGROMU KRZYŻAKOW POD GRUNWALDEN meaning 'The 500 year anniversary of the crushing of the Teutonic Order at Žalgiris'.



The detail and relief of both sides is excellent, though the edging and the hole of the ribbon ring are not quite on center. As can be seen, the ribbon ring lines up with the vertical axis of the reverse, but the vertical axis of the obverse is about 10 degrees off-center from the ribbon ring. Was this a test strike?

We do not know who issued this medal or for what purpose. Was it given out in recognition of a donations towards a statue to be built? Was the medal suspended from a ribbon or from a metal pin? And if it had a ribbon, what were

its colors? Should any of our readership has any information about this medal, please send it to the editor and we will publish it in an upcoming issue.

LETTERS

I enjoy 'The Knight' as it is. Maybe a little more heraldry and militaria would be fine. Yves Plasseraud, Paris, France.

Have received two requests as a consequence of my ad. Marius Urbalis, Panevėžys, Lithuania.

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